

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

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PC-01 USSS-00 SY-05 A-01 OPR-02 SCA-01 /102 W

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R 040605Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8298

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY GENEVA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 3862

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT SF SHUM

SUBJ: SCHOOL BOYCOTTS IN THE TRANSVAAL

REF: A) PRETORIA 3660, B) JOHANNESBURG 2003,

C) JOHANNESBURG 2006

1. SUMMARY: GOVERNMENT ARRESTS OF STUDENTS IN ATTERIDGE-VILLE, INCLUDING THE ENTIRE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL, OFFICIAL THREATS TO EXPEL ABSENT STUDENTS, AND GROWING PARENTAL UNEASE ARE DAMPENING THE SCHOOL BOYCOTT IN ATTERIDGEVILLE. SOWETO STUDENTS ARE STILL IN FERMENT, BUT DETENTIONS IN THE CAPE HAVE SO FAR EFFECTIVELY NEUTRALIZED STUDENTS IN THAT AREA. THE CURRENT SCHOOL BOYCOTT MOVEMENT IN THE TRANSVAAL IS
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PART OF THE STUDENT CAMPAIGN OF TRIAL AND ERROR ATTACKS ON APARTHEID INSTITUTIONS. THESE ONSLAUGHTS HAVE HAD MIXED RESULTS. WHILE THE ATTERIDGEVILLE BOYCOTT IS BEGINNING TO WEAKEN, CONTINUED STUDENT MILITANCY IN SOWETO COULD SPARK RENEWED EFFORTS IN THE PRETORIA AREA. END SUMMARY.

2. THE SCHOOL BOYCOTT BY APPROXIMATELY 20,000 STUDENTS IN ATTERIDGEVILLE, PRETORIA'S WESTERN TOWNSHIP (REFTL) WAS NEARLY COMPLETE FROM JULY 25 THROUGH AUGUST 2, WITH ALL TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS DESERTED. THE ATTERIDGEVILLE SAULSVILLE STUDENTS REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL (ASSRC) CALLED THE BOYCOTT TO PROTEST THE SYSTEM OF BANTU EDUCATION. THE STUDENTS ASSERTED THEY WOULD NOT RETURN TO CLASSES UNTIL THE SYSTEM WAS SCRAPPED AND REPLACED BY "NATIONAL EDUCATION." THE ASSRC HOPED THAT THE BOYCOTT WOULD SPREAD SPONTANEOUSLY TO OTHER TOWNSHIPS, EVENTUALLY BECOMING NATIONAL IN SCOPE. STUDENT LEADERS APPARENTLY UNDERTOOK ONLY LIMITED CONTACT WITH COUNTER-PARTS IN OTHER AREAS. THE BOYCOTT DID SPREAD BRIEFLY TO THE EAST PRETORIA TOWNSHIP OF MAMELODI, BUT SOON PETERED OUT. THREE HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE NORTH PRETORIA TOWNSHIP OF GARANKUWA ALSO JOINED AND ARE CONTINUING THE BOYCOTT. A NUMBER OF SOWETO SCHOOLS HAVE ALSO BEEN HIT BY BOYCOTTS SINCE JULY 26. THE PRESS REPORTS THAT ALL SOWETO HIGH SCHOOLS WERE DESERTED ON AUGUST 2. POLICE ARRESTS OF STUDENT LEADERS IN THE CAPE, HOWEVER, HAS SO FAR SEEMINGLY NEUTRALIZED STUDENTS IN THAT AREA. IN NATALAS WELL AS THE CAPE PROVINCE THERE HAS BEEN NO MOVE TO BOYCOTT BANTU EDUCATION.

3. IN ATTERIDGEVILLE, SOME VIOLENT INCIDENTS HAVE OCCURRED ALTHOUGH LESS THAN IN SOWETO. SECURITY FORCES
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TOOK PROMPT ACTION SHORTLY AFTER THE BOYCOTT BEGAN, REPORTEDLY ARRESTING 129 STUDENTS IN ATTERIDGEVILLE AND 64 IN MAMELODI. ALL ARE BEING HELD WITHOUT CHARGES, AND AT LEAST SOME ARE BEING DETAINED UNDER THE PREVENTATIVE DETENTION SECTION OF THE TERRORISM ACT. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY STUDENT CONTACTS IN ATTERIDGEVILLE, 13 MEMBERS OF THE ASSRC, INCLUDING THE ENTIRE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, ARE AMONG THE DETAINEES. WHILE MOST OF THE ARRESTS REPORTEDLY INVOLVED INDISCRIMINATE SWOOPS ON GROUPS OF LOITERING STUDENTS, A NUMBER OF ASSRC LEADERS WERE PICKED UP AT THEIR HOMES DURING EARLY MORNING HOURS. THE YOUNGEST KNOWN DETAINEE IS THE ASSRC TREASURER, AGED 14.

4. APPROXIMATELY 500 ATTERIDGEVILLE PARENTS MET IN THE TOWNSHIP ON JULY 31 TO DISCUSS THE SCHOOL CRISIS. PARENTS EXPRESSED MORAL SUPPORT FOR THE GOALS OF SCRAPPING BANTU EDUCATION AND DOING AWAY WITH ETHNIC SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL BOARDS, BUT THEY URGED THE STUDENTS TO END THE BOYCOTT AND RETURN TO CLASSES. MEANWHILE THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF BANTU EDUCATION, WHO PREVIOUSLY THREATENED TO CLOSE SCHOOLS IF STUDENTS DID NOT RETURN, ANNOUNCED AUGUST 1 THAT STUDENTS NOT BACK IN CLASS

BY AUGUST 5 WOULD BE PERMANENTLY EXPELLED.

5. AS OF AUGUST 3 IT APPEARS THAT SOME ATTERIDGEVILLE STUDENTS ARE BEGINNING TO RETURN TO CLASS. EMBASSY STUDENT SOURCES REPORT THAT THE SURVIVING ASSRC LEADERSHIP IS CONSIDERING ISSUING A BACK-TO-SCHOOL CALL, LARGELY AS A RESULT OF DISCOURAGEMENT THAT THE BOYCOTT DID NOT SPREAD MORE QUICKLY TO OTHER TOWNSHIPS. MOREOVER, THE ARREST OF THE ASSRC EXECUTIVE HAS LEFT THE STUDENTS WITHOUT STRONG LEADERS. FEAR OF INFORMERS IS HIGH, AND STUDENTS ARE RELUCTANT TO APPOINT OR SERVE ON NEW EXECUTIVE BEFORE END OF THE BOYCOTT SINCE THEY BELIEVE THAT TO DO SO WOULD MEAN ALMOST CERTAIN ARREST.

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6. COMMENT: THE ATTERIDGEVILLE BOYCOTT IS ANOTHER ELEMENT IN THE CONTINUING EFFORT OF BLACK STUDENTS THROUGHOUT SOUTH AFRICA TO KEEP UP PRESSURE ON THE SYSTEM. WHILE THE STUDENTS IN DIFFERENT TOWNSHIPS HAVE NOT COORDINATED THEIR ACTIONS IN ADVANCE, IN THE TRANSVAAL THERE HAS BEEN A SPONTANEOUS IF SPORADIC COMBUSTION OF TACTICS. THE TRIAL AND ERROR ATTACKS ON APARTHEID INSTITUTIONS HAVE HAD MIXED RESULTS. WHILE THE ATTERIDGEVILLE BOYCOTT IS BEGINNING TO WEAKEN, CONTINUED MILITANT STUDENT ACTION IN SOWETO, THE BELL WEATHER AND CENTER OF THE REBELLION OF THE YOUNG, COULD SPARK RENEWED EFFORTS IN THE PRETORIA AREA.
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